



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

On March 25, 2020, we sent you a letter signed by 80 Members of Congress urging you to include a prohibition on water shutoffs as you negotiate an agreement on a response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Access to safe water is an essential public health and safety measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Nonetheless, the proposed allocation of funds to help cover water bills for low-income families as well as the prohibition on water shutoffs did not make it into the enacted \$2.2 trillion rescue package under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As such, we ask that as we move towards the next COVID-19 stimulus response bill, any final agreement must include the Tlaib-Dingell provision prohibiting water shutoffs as well as a funding to help cover water bills for low-income families across the country.

According to the CDC, as of April 2nd, 2020, Michigan has reported the third highest number of COVID-19 cases in the U.S., with almost 9,500 cases.¹ Of those cases, 1,998 of them come from residents in Wayne County and 2,472 come from Detroit City, making up an alarming 21% and 26% of reported cases in Michigan, respectively.² The Associated Press reported last week that "water advocates and elected officials argue that it's impossible for families to follow the hygienic coronavirus standards outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization when they don't have water in their homes."³ This issue spans well beyond Wayne County and Detroit, as water shutoffs have been recorded in all 50 states.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>

² <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98163-520743--,00.html>

³ <https://apnews.com/cdfeb807db4439ea18834e7d217dc98d>

While many municipalities and states have issued moratoriums on water shut offs in the last few weeks in response to the accelerated spread of COVID-19, we must ensure a federal response that protects all households across the United States. As we mentioned in our previous letter, access to safe water is essential to maintain proper hygiene and prevent the transmission of COVID-19 to individuals inside and outside the household.

We must prevent water shutoffs by ensuring that no public water system servicing an individual or household disconnects or interrupts service during the COVID-19 emergency. That also means that debt collectors must not disconnect or terminate water or sewer service with respect to consumer water bill debts during this time. To ensure we prevent shutoffs in as efficient a manner as possible, Congress should consider utilizing the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program to assist low-income households, particularly those with the lowest incomes, that pay a high proportion of household income for drinking water and wastewater services.

No person living in the United States should be forced to survive without safe and clean water access, let alone during a global pandemic. It is essential that the next COVID-19 stimulus response bill include a water shutoff prohibition for the duration of the crisis as well as a fund that will help pay water bills for low-income households.

As always, thank you for your leadership—especially during this time of crisis.

Sincerely,



RASHIDA TLAIB
Member of Congress



DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress